

knowledge of the situation is revealed here, yet at best it was sketchy, incomplete and out of date: the DPP's investigation of Jackson & Co., and their solicitors, had been conducted and his (seemingly reluctant) decision against prosecution taken before even the earlier of the two remarks. Within four months of his death Lawrence never knew how narrowly he had escaped more public harassment, more evidence of 'the malignant power of the mob-like authorities' which he described in *Kangaroo* and had personally suffered for well over a decade.

### Endnotes

1. All documents mentioned are contained in the Home Office file No. 144/20642/343382 (now in the PRO). There are two exceptions: extracts from Lawrence's letters are from *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. James T. Boulton *et al*, Cambridge, 1979-1993, and identified in the text simply by volume and page numbers; quotations from the Parliamentary debate on 28 February 1929 are taken from *D. H. Lawrence: a Composite Biography*, ed. E. Nehls (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959), iii. 308-12.

### *Lady Chatterley's Unlikely Bedfellow: George Robey and the Language of Lawrence's Last Novel*

George Hyde

The 'bitsy' narrative style that Lawrence went in for in his late period (a sort of objective correlative for the complex sensations of resentment the writer felt in an age of journalistic superficiality) is shaped into a barbed satirical weapon in (for example) *St. Mawr*,<sup>1</sup> the chapter of *Kangaroo* called 'Bits',<sup>2</sup> and especially *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, where it forms a strange compound with elements drawn from the work of V.V. Rozanov, whom Lawrence admired in his last years and (misleadingly) called 'the first Russian writer who has said anything to me'.<sup>3</sup> 'Bitsiness' forms a deliberate, integral part of the comprehensive critique of language in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The *Chatterley* narrator embarks on his bitty, improvised narrative with an unsettling string of *ad hoc* aphorisms, knowing gestures towards his audience (addressed as 'we'), and clichés ('the war had brought the roof down over her head'<sup>4</sup>), in order to introduce the assertively untragic tale of Sir Clifford 'shipped over to England....more or less in bits'<sup>5</sup> at the end of the Great War. A Modernist aesthetic of fragments (a collage, improvised effect) is coupled to an angular, gestural recitation-manner which encompasses both Sir Clifford's pain and the direct, uncensored engagement with 'this sex thing',<sup>6</sup> especially (at this stage of the narrative) the 'sex-thrill'<sup>7</sup> which threatens to 'overpower' (!) women if they are not careful. Maybe there are three battlefields in the book: the one that wrecked Sir Clifford's life, the sexual minefield for which the novel is notorious, and Lawrence's battle with the Protean forms of language, his struggle to find a viable modern narrative among the post-war debris, the 'bits'<sup>8</sup> left over.

To do justice to all the implications of the dramatic tour-de-force of this hard and brittle synthesis, in relation to the painful search for 'the roots that clutch'<sup>9</sup> among the four-letter words of Lawrence's revivalist vernacular, would be a major undertaking. Let it be enough for the present moment to dwell upon one detail: the narrator's much-repeated phrase (in Chapter Six) 'That's that!', a sustained allusion to the work of a music-hall entertainer who was born eleven years before Lawrence, and died twenty-four years after him, George Robey. Known as 'The Prime Minister of Mirth',<sup>10</sup> Robey had many successes, but none greater than his 1915 song *That's that!*,<sup>11</sup> the title of which became his catch-phrase. In an era of great suffering, Robey (like Marie Lloyd, admired by Eliot, and like many other music-hall artistes), kept people's spirits up while, and perhaps by, offering strange and subtle comments on 'forbidden' topics in their private lives.<sup>12</sup> Robey and the others could engage with the life of a mass audience in a more human and *personal* way than the newspapers could, and without patronising or exploiting the masses. Like Marie Lloyd, he had a special gift for expressing the potential for humiliation and defeat which life contains (skirting the grotesque in quite a personal, autobiographical way).<sup>13</sup> But he managed at the same time to hit upon the tone of voice of a survivor, a hopeless sort of off-beat heroism,<sup>14</sup> which went down particularly well with his audience. Despite representing attitudes to sex Lawrence might have been expected to resent, Robey, I will suggest, made a significant contribution to *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. This fictional encounter with music-hall is not Lawrence's first. The travelling theatre in *The Lost Girl* is a kind of music-hall, and in *The Rainbow* Will visits the music-hall to escape the stresses of his home life (and to look for a casual sexual relationship. Music-hall was definitely 'sexy', and the police patrolled it intensively on the look-out for organised prostitution).

The keynote of Robey's song is the way it works with apparently unpromising materials (banal erotic fantasies, grossly sexist comments on marriage, smut, stock patter routines, and an awkward game with codes and registers), to the accompaniment of a rather undistinguished sort of fairground music,<sup>15</sup> and expresses through them a complex range of feelings, with disturbing glimpses of something more serious in the interstices of the banalities. Eliot's comments on Marie Lloyd come to mind: that she represented 'that part of the English nation which has perhaps the greatest vitality and interest', that her audiences were peculiarly 'sympathetic', or in tune with what she was doing, that she raised their lives to the status of 'a kind of art' and produced not so much hilarity as happiness.<sup>16</sup> Eliot asserts that she was never 'grotesque' (like Nellie Wallace or Little Tich for example). Perhaps this cannot be said so unequivocally of Robey, but he is never *gratuitously* grotesque. In real life, he was concerned about his 'image' to a point where people felt he cultivated respectability, and the patronage of the good and the great, more than he should.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps Lawrence did not find in Robey's art the equivalent of what Eliot discovered in Marie Lloyd's 'One of the Ruins that Cromwell Knocked Abaht a Bit', which is not only quite autobiographical<sup>18</sup> but also chimes in bizarrely with the poet's own passionate reading of seventeenth century English history.<sup>19</sup> But the resigned shrug of 'that's that', echoed five times in Chapter Six of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, was certainly a gesture Robey's audience both recognised and emulated. In this way they got to participate in the represented world of the song, finding in it a vicarious expression of their own sexual fears and desires, while at the same time, perhaps, laughing at their voyeuristic tendencies. 'That's that!' is variously an expression of resignation, realism, good sense, and a pragmatic acceptance of the vanity of human wishes. But it is also a sort of hopeless finality.



The interrupted fantasy of self-gratification in Robey's Verse One is shrugged off only in order to prepare the way for the sterner stuff of the second verse, which represents the vengeful wife, though with bizarre displacements. The last verse dismisses the narrator, who has by now vindicated himself, with a few disparaging remarks. Actually the narrator does a kind of disappearing trick.

Verse One opens by telling us that its author is known for his 'terseness', thereby preparing his audience for something perhaps a bit shocking which he will not seek to justify. It is a banal little anecdote about how he watched a girl undressing, through the window of the house opposite, only to be disappointed, at the climax of the process, by her pulling down not what he had hoped but the blind. His 'terseness' thus acquires a new meaning: the song will be as brief and as soon curtailed as his pleasure. Ostensibly he was gazing out of his window at a different sort of heavenly body (Venus and Mars, he claims, which reminds us how the eunuch Mardian in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, who could 'do nothing in deed', liked to think 'what Venus did with Mars', an adulterous liaison). Curiously, the voyeuristic speaker thinks no good will come to the girl: 'She's asking for trouble, she is.' If she is just preparing 'to retire', as he claims, there should be no reason to anticipate danger, surely. The 'trouble' can only be of his making, in the form of the sexual fantasy, unspecified, in which he (or another) is an agent. As in Hitchcock's film *Rear Window*, the artificially restricted field of vision is enormously suggestive. 'Fate proved unkind/For she altered her mind': but what, really, was on her mind to start with? Or did she know she was being watched, and only at the last minute decided not to give the voyeur the satisfaction he craved?

Verse Two couples love with death via a 'degraded' image of marriage of the sort that might have appealed to an audience which had experienced too much of it (and per-

haps many marriages in 1915 were beginning to feel the severe strains of the war years, in addition to the burdens habitually imposed on the poorer section of the population by poverty and child-rearing). The emphasis now, despite the fantastical images, is on the real world of sexual relations rather than on starry-eyed fantasy. The narrator now presents himself as virtually impotent in relation to a wife who is 'strong-minded' and has in addition so strong a will that she chooses to 'try' it on a bull in a field (though the exercise actually involves mind over matter, the conjuror's mainstay, rather than physical strength, since she intends to overcome the bull by the power of her gaze from a safe distance). Alas, on this particular occasion her will-power is 'flat', and the stanza ends with a tersely enigmatic note of elegy in its last two lines:

The poor girl did her best, the bull did the rest  
There are no flowers by request, and that's that.<sup>20</sup>

Quite how the bull overcame her (sexually?) is as obscure as the question of how she intended to overcome the bull, since the song does not say she entered the bull's field. The imprecision adds to the dream-like atmosphere of menace, and perhaps links Mrs. Horace with Pasiphae.<sup>21</sup>

The 'that's that' this time carries a different emphasis from the shrug of disappointed voyeurism in Verse One: his wife, killed (and perhaps raped) by the bull, will not be mourned. This crude fantasy of sexual prowess (the bull of course being quintessentially virile) strong enough to kill, admirably complements the first stanza. It is as if the self-gratifying fantasy interrupted there will be compensated or revenged by 'real' death, as the cause of all his frustration is conveniently removed by a dangerous act which *she* undertook (he can now present himself as blameless). In the course of the stanza, however, he has been branded (in words which he quotes from his wife) 'a worm, a drivelling coward': strong language, but of course they are the staple stuff of domestic



disputes and domestic violence, and easily recognised as such by Robey's audience. So is the element of wish-fulfilment in the bull fantasy. Readers of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* will recognise the vernacular tone and to some degree perhaps the uncensored content as well of Mellors' misogynist fantasies about Bertha, his wife, in the account of his marriage he gives to Connie: 'Self! Self! Self! All self! Tearing and shouting!...she had to work the thing herself, to grind her own coffee'.<sup>22</sup>

It is as if Robey's highly stylised tropes of voyeuristic eroticism, sexual assertiveness (castration?), and defeat had at this point proved too much for the slender artistic convention which contains them. The boundaries of audience receptiveness need to be renegotiated. The song 'collapses' into an extraordinary music-less monologue – the manner is in some ways still close to that of the *Chatterley* narrator, though the stammerings, apologies, and unconvincing protestations of both disinterestedness and complicity betray more uncertainty. Eliot stressed how Marie Lloyd's art relied extensively upon the 'collaboration of the audience with the artist which is necessary in all art and most obviously in dramatic art'.<sup>23</sup> Here, Robey, too, becomes 'collaborative' in a very creative way, precisely because he does *not* have his audience-response on this occasion, as he is recording. 'It's no laughing matter' he protests (another quotable catch-phrase),<sup>24</sup> 'we may as well understand one another.' First he says it's not fair if they laugh at him, then (subtly) points to a failure of understanding ('ignorance') on their part (with a mocking mechanical laugh 'ha ha ha ha').

Then, feigning to be at a loss for words, Robey uses a long one ('cognisant') because the audience (he says) has forced him to, somehow linking this 'posh' word with the imperative that he should speak into 'this tube' (an abstract mechanical process: which is why his listeners 'are not cognisant of the facts'). Lawrence's reference to Sir Clifford

'listening-in' (to the wireless) in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, contains a similarly disparaging allusion to mechanical reproduction.<sup>25</sup> Many artistes found the gramophone an irritation, and some actively resisted it because it interfered with the rapport that live performances gave. Moreover, though lucrative in itself, recording could damage box-office takings.<sup>26</sup> The act of recording is linked here to the artifice of the seaside photograph (familiar to the audience) which 'works' by means of the subject inserting his or her face into a cut-out or painted figure (sentimental, heroic, ludicrous), thereby creating a grotesque collocation: 'I'm asked if I will kindly oblige by putting my face here and making myself ludicrous' (i.e. singing into a large metal horn). 'Ludicrous' is one of those long words that was passed down to the heirs of music-hall (Frankie Howard was especially fond of it).

Another long word, 'nefarious', follows, then another, 'intestine', this time with a significant gloss, as we shall see. To restart the music, Robey calls for 'the scraping of the hair of the horse across the intestine of the cat' (i.e. a violin) telling us that he used the word 'intestine' instead of the 'indelicate' word 'gut'. Euphemism is, of course, a traditional component of nudge-nudge sexual humour: but what is striking here is that Robey has both censored himself and simultaneously restored the deleted (offensive) item. Nothing is at stake here apart from the artiste's reputation for decency or gentility, and even then the field of reference is not particularly contentious. But the juggling with words (culminating in a defiant 'that's that!' - nothing more to be said about the limits of language) is by no means pointless. It directs attention to the acceptability or otherwise of the entire discourse of the song, telling us that (of course) Robey is not pandering to a vulgar taste for crudity, but keeping up standards. The question of how and why 'vulgar' words may be admitted into a text is of course central to *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, where elaborate interpersonal and cultural fac-



tors endorse the author's narrative decision to 'redeem' his four-letter words. Common to both Robey's and Lawrence's texts is an anxiety about class-determined codes which impose their own value systems on language. 'Censorship' and the battle against it therefore have far-reaching implications for the different *levels* at which a culture operates through the language it uses. Mellors of course goes much further than Robey, and even counter to him, by way of restoring a sexual language (which is also, unmistakably, a language of power) to its 'full' uncensored rights and authority, by way of relating it to a 'deeper' and more effectively *hidden* level of discourse.

Robey's song ends with a sort of epic self-disparagement that actually amounts to boasting (as the opening line of the last stanza, 'Now a star fell the day I was born', makes startlingly clear). The mantle of the portentous 'star-crossed' hero sits awkwardly on him: but so it does on Mellors, the sad figure 'castrated' by the great sexual 'beak' of his first wife, which he recalls with a truly Freudian horror. He turns himself in revenge into a chthonic 'green man' by the selfconscious use of a vernacular/dialectal magic language which effectively controls Connie (an assertion of power which actually pleases her). The 'extraordinariness' of Robey as a child, registered in his third verse, is entirely ironic. Of the triplets born to Robey's mother, one was a girl 'strong and fat', and then – 'The next is a he/ A fine babe you'll agree/Then he pointed at me/And that's that!'<sup>27</sup> – casting Robey in the role of the latecomer-as-inheritor about whom there was little more to say (which confers on him his 'magic' status). It is interesting how the ranking of the children 'born' in the last verse again asserts the power and predominance of the female, with the males following in a descending rank down to the banal and implausible figure of the music-hall artiste speaking in his own voice. The comedy is based upon the successive disillusionments and rejections

which constitute the essential grounds of Robey's extraordinariness as anti-hero: and so, perhaps, with Mellors.

Lawrence's echoes of the Robey catch-phrase ('that's that') occur at carefully measured intervals in Chapter Six of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, in which various jargons are tested to destruction, as are different kinds of sexual discourses (and in which there is Connie's brief 'liberated' involvement with Michaelis, described with amazing verisimilitude). This is the chapter in which the much-quoted expression of distaste at the abuse of language in our time ('Home! It was a warm word to use for that great weary warren'<sup>28</sup>) leading up by stages to the intimate language of Mellors as daemon of the woods, leaves Connie's sadness exposed for all to see. 'Sex' is the worst of the exciting 'cocktail' words, leaving you 'more raggy than ever' when all is said and done and 'that's that'.<sup>29</sup> The stubborn stoicism of his phrase seems to please the narrator: 'In the very experience of the nothingness of life...there was a certain grisly satisfaction' especially if Michaelis, with his interminable, irritating game of pocket billiards,<sup>30</sup> is supposed to be the answer to a dull marriage.<sup>31</sup>

So that's *that!* always this was the last utterance:  
home, love, marriage, Michaelis: So that's *that!* And  
when one died, the last words to life would be: So  
that's *that!*<sup>32</sup>

The other side of this fatalism is the money-thing. George Robey spoke briefly of the (considerable) financial incentives involved in making a fool of yourself, singing into a tube, if you knew how to do it. But for all of us the 'bitch-goddess' of money (cited by Lawrence after Henry James) is important: 'You couldn't spend your last sou, and say finally: So that's that!'<sup>33</sup> – because to live is to need money, alas. Lawrence, like Robey, links money with the machine *passim*: 'Just to keep the business mechanically going, you needed money. You had to have it. Money you *have* to have. You



needn't really have anything else. So that's that!<sup>34</sup> The narrator's edgy, irritating repetitions of this mechanical litany carry a distinct echo of Robey's manner as he speaks into his 'tube', in the hope that there is somebody out there to respond sympathetically to his careful choice of words. Cliché follows cliché, in order to establish intimacy on the basis of familiarity: 'All the rest you can get along without, at a pinch. But not money. Emphatically, *that's that!*'<sup>35</sup> Connie's/the narrator's litany concludes (like Robey's) with a fantasy about a succession of offspring: the estate needs an heir. Where Robey listed the three children (ending in the ludicrous one, himself), Connie lists the possible (or impossible) lovers who might father her child, Michaelis ('Repulsive thought! As lief have a child to a rabbit'), Tommy Dukes ('he ended in himself') – 'There were several who would have been quite possible as lover, even Mick. But to let them breed a child on you! Ugh! Humiliation and abomination. So that was that!'<sup>36</sup> She thinks the father of her child will have to be a foreigner.

The improvisatory monologue of the narrator is now complemented by another kind of popular discourse, this time without the 'that's that!' finality that seems to deny hope. Mellors is of course a skilled performer too, switching codes as Robey does, eager to supply the items which he knows are taboo and therefore subversive, as part of his bid for recognition, and his technique of seduction. It is no longer a question of being 'ravished by dead words',<sup>37</sup> however, whether drawn from high or from low culture. It is a question of a renewal of language from the roots. But the anxiety about where the language of the people comes from, and what sort of communicative power it has, is if anything stronger in the latter part of Lawrence's novel, because of the intensely personal bearing it has upon 'the secret places' of desire<sup>38</sup> and therefore of art as the image of desire. The 'four letter words' are the key that unlocks the door of desire

in the gamekeeper's hut. But the keeper is a modern sort of guardian, half a poacher, whose power is at least half illicit, and a bit ironic.

The 'that's that!' motif therefore persists in a new form, as a gestural naming of parts, in an attempt to subvert the spurious genteel codes of romance and hypocrisy. 'That's that!' has generated a new sort of facticity, and a new clear-sightedness, calling a spade a spade after the manner of 'the people', allowing the split signifiers of literary discourse to get in touch again with an expressiveness that defeats our 'mechanical' and abstract civilisation: that (now) is *really* that, the unnameable named. Robey could, or would, never have done it; and Lawrence (let's not forget) was, and is, anathematised for doing it.<sup>39</sup> A powerful modernist myth of new life growing from the roots of archaisms and dialect sustains the hoped-for resurrection of the body of language; but all because Mellors chooses, for his own purposes, to privilege his restricted code over the prevailing (institutional) elaborated code<sup>40</sup> and name parts, as a consequence of which 'Now anybody can 'ave any childt i'th'world'.<sup>41</sup> He seduces her ladyship in an idiom which amuses her, and they exchange laughter as they pass the taboo words back and forth and really get 'in touch':<sup>42</sup>

When he came back she was still lying there, glowing like a gypsy. He sat on the stool by her. 'Tha mun come one naight ter th'cottage, afore tha goos, sholl ter?' he asked. 'Sholl ter?' she echoed, teasing. He smiled. 'Ay, sholl ter?' he repeated. 'Ay!' she said, imitating the dialect sound. 'Yi!' he said. 'Yi!' she repeated. 'An' slaip wi' me,' he said. 'It needs that. When sholt come?' 'When sholl I?' she said. 'Nay,' he said, 'tha canna do't. When sholt come then?' 'Appen Sunday', she said. 'Appen a'Sunday! Ay!' He laughed at her quickly... 'Th'art good cunt, though,



aren't ter? Best bit o'cunt left on earth. When ter likes! When tha'rt willin'.'<sup>43</sup>

As she ran home the trees 'seemed bulging and surging', and 'the heave of the slope to the house was alive',<sup>44</sup> as if the body of the earth were animated by the dark gods hidden in the secret places of Mellors' magic language of seduction.

The key phrase, however, is 'when th'art willin'.' The 'restricted code' of the language of seduction is accepted by Connie as part of an amorous game freely participated in, as W.B. Yeats was the first to note. The 'freedom' of this game is somehow posited upon the power of the four-letter words to summon up a natural landscape animated by 'the folk', and their dark gods, at the heart of the Chatterley estate. This may seem a long way from George Robey, but I do not think it is. Eliot was not wrong when he discovered in Marie Lloyd 'the expressive figure of the lower classes' who had a special 'understanding of the people and sympathy with them'.<sup>45</sup> Her status as entertainer was, for him, only a part of the imperative need which she represented to bond 'the aristocracy' (among whom Eliot includes the hereditary guardians of culture) with 'the people', in order to circumvent the power of the middle classes who 'are morally corrupt'.<sup>46</sup> The whole undertaking was strangely collaborative:

The working-man who went to the music-hall and saw Marie Lloyd and joined in the chorus was himself performing part of the act; he was engaged in that collaboration of the audience with the artist which is necessary in all art and most obviously in dramatic art.<sup>47</sup>

There is an echo here of Nietzsche and the participational (seductive?) aesthetic which he transmitted to Modernism in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872). If Eliot's view of the fate of a world deprived of its folk culture<sup>48</sup> is over-pessimistic, his

point – and Lawrence's – about the immense difficulty of, and the imperative need for, a new kind of creative engagement with life and language remains perennially valid.

Lawrence found such sentiments corroborated in the work of V.V. Rozanov,<sup>49</sup> which he reviewed right at the end of his life, at first with some reservations, then very positively indeed. Lawrence liked the fact that while 'making cigarettes', or in the lavatory, Rozanov would improvise a discourse upon sex or death (or commonly on both), bringing into it some very personal items (especially in connection with his relationship with his wife) as well as what he had been reading, historical materials, and sharp snapshot-like images of objects in his immediate environment to which some kind of affect had, for whatever reason, attached itself. For the Russian author, as for Lawrence, marriage was the true focus of erotic energy. Rozanov's 'bittiness' is alluded to in the title of one such collection of jottings,<sup>50</sup> and his strange isolation (the melancholy solitude of the survivor) is mentioned in the title of the other volume Lawrence read. His collage of fragments points, however, to a subterranean (maybe unconscious) narrative logic, as Shklovsky's study of him shows, wherein they are all gathered up, just as in the work of his great forebear Dostoevsky. In other books Rozanov makes sex the fulcrum upon which the world, and the world of art, turns. In these two, his vigorous sexual and erotic interests are more subdued, and linked more directly to the theme of marriage and to his memories of his dead wife. Indeed, it may truly be said that the real theme of both these books is death. But the *Apocalypse* fragments appended to *Solitaria*, which Lawrence applauded, return vividly to his sexual preoccupations. He also has a sharp sense of the special nature of Russian culture, its self-contradictory aims and ambitions, its peculiar, uncanny capacity for truth-telling amidst enormous self-dramatising self-deceptions, its strange visionary populism. Perhaps

Lawrence's self-dissecting, self-defining, self-renewing narrative in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* shows a deeper affinity with Rozanov than with Robey. Yet perhaps in Rozanov too, in his determination to move away 'the bookcase' that obstructs our view<sup>51</sup> and call a spade a spade, there is a more than a touch of Robey's defiance, his bedraggled heroism, and his interest in the 'naughty bits' as well:

The earth itself wants seed...Now, shall we say with Christianity that all this is 'a lie'? And that theology can only be found in seminaries? But surely there is much more theology in a bull jumping on a cow...(*Solitaria*)<sup>52</sup>

#### George Robey *That's That!* 1915

My remarks are remarkably terse  
I've never been known as long-winded  
One night through my casement whilst watching the  
stars  
My gaze was diverted from Venus and Mars  
For a fair female form at the window  
In the gaslight I happened to quiz  
Thought I: if that girl is about to retire  
She's asking for trouble she is  
The maiden commenced to disrobe  
She took off her blouse and her hat  
Then fate proved unkind  
For she altered her mind  
And she pulled down the blind and that's that.

Now my wife is a strong-minded woman  
There's nothing on earth she's afraid of  
Whenever she's near me I'm quite overpowered  
She says I'm a worm, just a drivelling coward  
One morning she said to me 'Horace  
My will-power I'm going to try

On that bull in yon field I will now demonstrate  
The power of the bare human eye.'  
The wife fixed her eye on the bull  
But her will-power that morning was flat  
The poor girl did her best, the bull did the rest  
There are no flowers by request, and that's that.

(Monologue)

Oh it's no laughing matter, I said it's no laughing matter. Look here, before we go any further we may as well understand one another, I say here, I've not come here to be made a laughing stock of, it's hardly fair to me, you know, I say it's hardly fair to me. I don't think you know what you're doing really. I'm sorry to have to chide you, but I'm afraid I must put it down to ignorance on your part ha ha ha ha. Yes it's all very well. You don't seem to grasp the - er - what do they call it - you're not aware of the er er. You're not cognisant of the facts - there, now I've said it - you've forced me to...I don't do this for fun...I don't think you know I get things for doing this, added to which that I am asked to come here and sing into this tube. Hm...I know it's all very well...I'm asked if I will kindly oblige by putting my face here and making myself ludicrous, and then I'm made a laughing stock of. It isn't fair. So I think I will, er, proceed to carry out my nefarious designs with the aid of the scraping of the hair of the horse across the intestine of the cat. You notice that I said 'intestine' because I think 'gut' sounds so indelicate. And that's that.

Now a star fell the day I was born  
I was one of a party of triplets  
The nurse nearly fainted the first time I smiled  
The doctor said Hm! An extraordinary child  
My father on hearing the verdict  
Arrived in a terrible state  
Ah doctor! he said



Don't keep me in suspense  
 But let me at once know my fate  
 The doctor said, Sir, there are three  
 The first is a girl strong and fat  
 The next is a he  
 A fine babe you'll agree  
 Then he pointed at me  
 And that's that!

### Endnotes

1. In *St. Mawr* (1925), Lawrence creates a 'bitty' style in order to 'place' Rico's world of superficial self-seeking 'artistic' activity.
2. In Chapter Fourteen of *Kangaroo* (1923), Somers admires the 'concise, laconic style' of the 'bits' in the *Bully* (the *Sydney Bulletin*), a newspaper which cultivated a popular touch quite unlike the 'horrible stuffiness of English newspapers' (D.H. Lawrence, *Kangaroo*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1997, p.269). See also n.3 and n.49.
3. The reviews of V.V. Rozanov's volumes *Solitaria* and *Fallen Leaves* (1927 and 1930 respectively) show Lawrence initially resistant to Rozanov's 'bitty', improvised manner, then won over to such a degree that he (misleadingly) asserted Rozanov's prime importance in Russian writing. Cf. E.D. McDonald (ed.), *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D.H. Lawrence*, London: Heinemann, 1961, pp. 367-371 and 388-392. Rozanov had the habit of locating some of his most challenging thoughts in contexts ('examining my coins'; 'in the lavatory') which were strangely contingent and contributed to a sense of existential exposure. The strange *ad hoc* quality of these writings also betrays their journalistic origins (see n.49).
4. D.H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, London: Penguin Books, 1997, p.5.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, pp.8 and 9.
7. *Ibid.*, p.9. Hereafter *Lady C.*
8. Including (of course) the 'naughty bits'.
9. Eliot's phrase (*The Waste Land*). Cf. G.M. Hyde, *Macmillan Modern Novelists: D.H. Lawrence*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990.
10. George Robey (George Edward Wade) (1869-1954) was (he said) Cambridge-educated and middle class, with a love of classical music. Maybe because of this unusual background he was particularly expert at the music-hall game of 'code-switching', getting onto the wave-length

of his audience, by means of self-deprecating or self-aggrandising games with 'posh' ways of talking. He began performing in 1881. As Midge Gillies reports, 'In January 1898 the *News of the World* started to publish the words and music of a music-hall song every week. A piano was installed in the paper's offices near Fleet St. and performers like Marie Lloyd or George Robey dropped by to try out their songs' (Gillies, *Marie Lloyd: The One and Only*, London: Gollancz, 1999, p.70). In this way artistes could both complement and challenge the mass journalism of the time, adding other (naughtier) 'bits' to the already bitty press. Despite being one of the highest paid performers (along with Little Tich and Marie Lloyd) at the time of the artistes' strike in 1906, Robey came out in support. He was a natural choice for the Royal Command Performance in 1912, and only Pavlova got a longer time-slot. During the Great War, Robey's review (*The Bing Boys*) was enormously popular. Then he performed again at the King's second Command Performance in 1919, by which time his songs were known far and wide. He adapted easily to legitimate theatre, revue, film, radio and television, and despite his Chaplinesque bowler hat, frock coat, and cane, and his heavily exaggerated eyebrows (for raising!), there was a consensus that he never sacrificed his art to his mannerisms, as some artistes did. He was made CBE in 1919 and knighted in 1954, eleven months before he died. Cf. Midge Gillies, *op. cit. passim*.

11. *That's That!* is attributed solely to George Robey. It was recorded acoustically on 19 May 1915, and reissued by Saydisc Records in 1990 (Saydisc CD-SDL 380). The copyright rests with Associated Copy-rights. Lawrence's use of the phrase in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is echoed in a letter to Mabel Dodge Luhan of 12 April 1926 (*Letters*, Vol. 5, ed. Boulton and Vasey, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p.423). Here, as in the novel, the phrase is not specifically attributed to Robey, although the context again strongly suggests Robey's song ('The only thing to do is to close down for the time the fountains of emotion, and face life as far as possible emotionless. But you've said a sort of last word - That's that! - to Jesus' *Consummatum est*'). I am grateful to my research student, See Young Park, for pointing out this reference.
12. Robey's personal life was kept in the background, unlike Marie Lloyd's. Her three marriages, and the scandalous behaviour (of partners rather than herself) that got into the press, affected her career; but for many of her admirers, the courage and skill with which she converted private pain into public satire was an essential part of her art. Cf. Midge Gillies, *op. cit.*, and T.S. Eliot, 'Marie Lloyd' (*Selected Essays*, London: Faber and Faber, 1958, pp. 456-460).



13. Little Tich, vertically challenged as he was, made altogether too much of his strangely fascinating long shoes. Robey's emphasis was on *human* interest, not props.
14. I do not think it is an exaggeration to see the War as playing a major part in this heroism, as it does in the work of so many of the greatest writers of the period (Eliot, Lawrence, Woolf).
15. I think this is deliberate (it might have been the kind of music that would have accompanied Mark Gertler's *Whirligig*, a picture so representative of the abrasiveness of modern 'fun' that Lawrence wanted to purchase it). Many music hall songs are musically very inventive and wholly delightful: but not this one.
16. T.S. Eliot, *op. cit.*, pp.456 and 457.
17. Robey's success (with the Royal Family for example) naturally attracted adverse comment from other less successful artistes.
18. Marie Lloyd was undoubtedly commenting, by means of her 'objective correlative', or persona, of the 'middle aged woman of the charwoman class', on the propensity of her third husband to knock her about, a fact which had got into the press. Domestic violence was of course very much on Eliot's mind when he wrote *The Waste Land* and his seminal essay on Marie Lloyd (not to mention the extraordinary 'Sweeney', where we see clearly the music-hall influence). Cf. Midge Gillies, *op. cit.*, pp.259-60: 'a good man when sober, but drunk he was very violent' - a comment, by a friend of Marie's, on Bernard Dillon, her third husband.
19. The title alone of Marie Lloyd's famous song (which, unbeknown to Eliot, who denies the fact, she put on film), tells us clearly enough what her fascination for Eliot consisted in. Here, suddenly, was a living testimony to the truth of Eliot's complex thesis about the 'dissociation of sensibility' that occurred during the English Civil War, advanced in *The Metaphysical Poets* two years before, and embodied in *The Waste Land*, *passim*. It was the Cromwellian period of Civil War that 'knocked about' British society in such a divisive way, leaving the lower ('working') class forever materially disadvantaged in relation to the 'morally corrupt' (Eliot's phrase) middle class, and forever out of touch with the aristocracy, their natural masters.
20. George Robey, *That's That!*
21. Pasiphae, wife of King Minos of Crete, fell in love with a white bull sent to her husband for sacrifice. Her child was imprisoned in the labyrinth made by Daedalus.
22. 'Grinding her own coffee' is the kind of euphemistic trope that Victor Shklovsky finds typical of the erotic defamiliarisations in the Russian folk tale (Victor Shklovsky, *Art as Technique*, 1917). It would be equally in place in a music-hall song.
23. T.S. Eliot, 'Marie Lloyd', *op. cit.*
24. Cf. the novel by Angus Wilson of that title (*No Laughing Matter*).
25. *Lady C.*, ch. 10, p.115, where Sir Clifford has come to prefer the radio to human company: 'He would sit alone for hours listening to the loudspeaker bellowing forth. It amazed and stunned Connie. But there he would sit, with a blank expression on his face, like a person losing his mind, and listen, or seem to listen, to the unspeakable thing.' The word 'unspeakable' communicates some of the same sort of fascinated distaste that Robey feels for his 'ludicrous tube'. 'The singer and musicians were arranged so that the maximum sound made its way into a metal recording horn that jutted out of the wall. A performer, like Marie (Lloyd), who was particularly short, stood on a wooden box so that their mouth was nearer the horn' (Gillies, *op. cit.*, p.154).
26. This may be why she never recorded (except on film) the outstandingly popular 'Cromwell song' (variously 'It's a bit of a ruin' or 'I'm one of the ruins'), which in fact she did not write herself (it was composed by Harry Bedford and Terry Sullivan).
27. Robey, *That's That!* (concluding lines).
28. *Lady C.*, p.65.
29. *Ibid.*
30. 'He turned aside, working his hands furiously in his trousers pockets' (*Lady C.*, p.56). This (Michaelis' preference for masturbation, rather than intercourse) is a recurrent motif.
31. 'Since Michaelis, she had made up her mind she wanted nothing. That seemed the simplest solution of the otherwise insoluble' (*Lady C.*, p.67).
32. *Ibid.*, p.65.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*, p.67.
37. *Ibid.*, p.97.
38. *Ibid.*, p.105.
39. I speak of the hostility and derision still aroused by Lawrence's appropriation of 'four-letter words'.
40. Cf. Basil Bernstein, *Class, Codes, Control*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1971-77.
41. *Lady C.*, p.84.
42. Dialect 'touches' the world in a different way, refuses abstractions and generalisations.
43. *Lady C.*, p.184.
44. *Ibid.*, p.185.
45. T.S. Eliot, 'Marie Lloyd', *op. cit.*, p.458.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Ibid.* Cf. n. 19.



48. The fact of the appropriation of this belief by reactionary political ideologies does not invalidate it.
49. It seems difficult to determine exactly when Lawrence first discovered Rozanov, whose commentary on Dostoevsky's *Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*, published in Russia in 1890, was certainly known to S.S. Koteliansky. Lawrence registers very acutely his awareness of the fact that Rozanov represents the culmination of a tradition in Russian writing.
50. The 'leaves' have fallen from the parent 'tree' of the 'great tradition' of Russian writing. Rozanov's autumnal melancholy is accompanied (as in *Lady C.*) by prophetic vitalism and eroticism. Rozanov's two volumes take the form of a kind of Pascalian 'pensées'. But the brevity and laconicism of his 'bits' also have a lot to do with the fact that he was writing for a column in the journal *Novoye Vremya* where the physical shape of his column-inches was pre-ordained.
51. V.V. Rozanov, *Solitaria*, London: Wishart and Co., 1927, p.155.
52. *Ibid.*

## The Strange Becomings of Sir Clifford Chatterley: a Schizoanalysis

Stephen Alexander

### *The Philosophy of Difference and Becoming*

The process of becoming must be understood not as the unfolding of an essence toward the goal of fixed being, but, rather, as something involving 'the affirmation of the positivity of difference, meant as a multiple and constant process of transformation.'<sup>1</sup> A genuine becoming is always, therefore, a becoming-other and not simply progression or regression along a straight line of identity. It is always an unwilling process; an opening up to the strange forces of desire and disintegration, not an attempt to filter these forces through the ego in order to experience them as conscious sensation, thereby bartering away physical intensity for mere mental representation. Connie Chatterley's becoming the New Eve and the becoming-Old Adam of her lover, Parkin/Mellors, provide good examples of the above.

However, not all becomings are pure in this manner; some, like those of Sir Clifford Chatterley, are inherently decadent attempts to explore and experience the process of disintegration whilst refusing to surrender the old self: what Lawrence refers to as 'corruption within the mind'. It is these counterfeit-becomings of Sir Clifford about which we wish to say something here.

### *The Becoming-Cybermensch and Becoming-Baby of Sir Clifford Chatterley*

If both Connie and Mellors accept the need for breakdown in order to achieve a breakthrough into the fourth dimensional